THE LOST WORLD OF OLD EUROPE THE DANUBE VALLEY, 5000-3500 BC



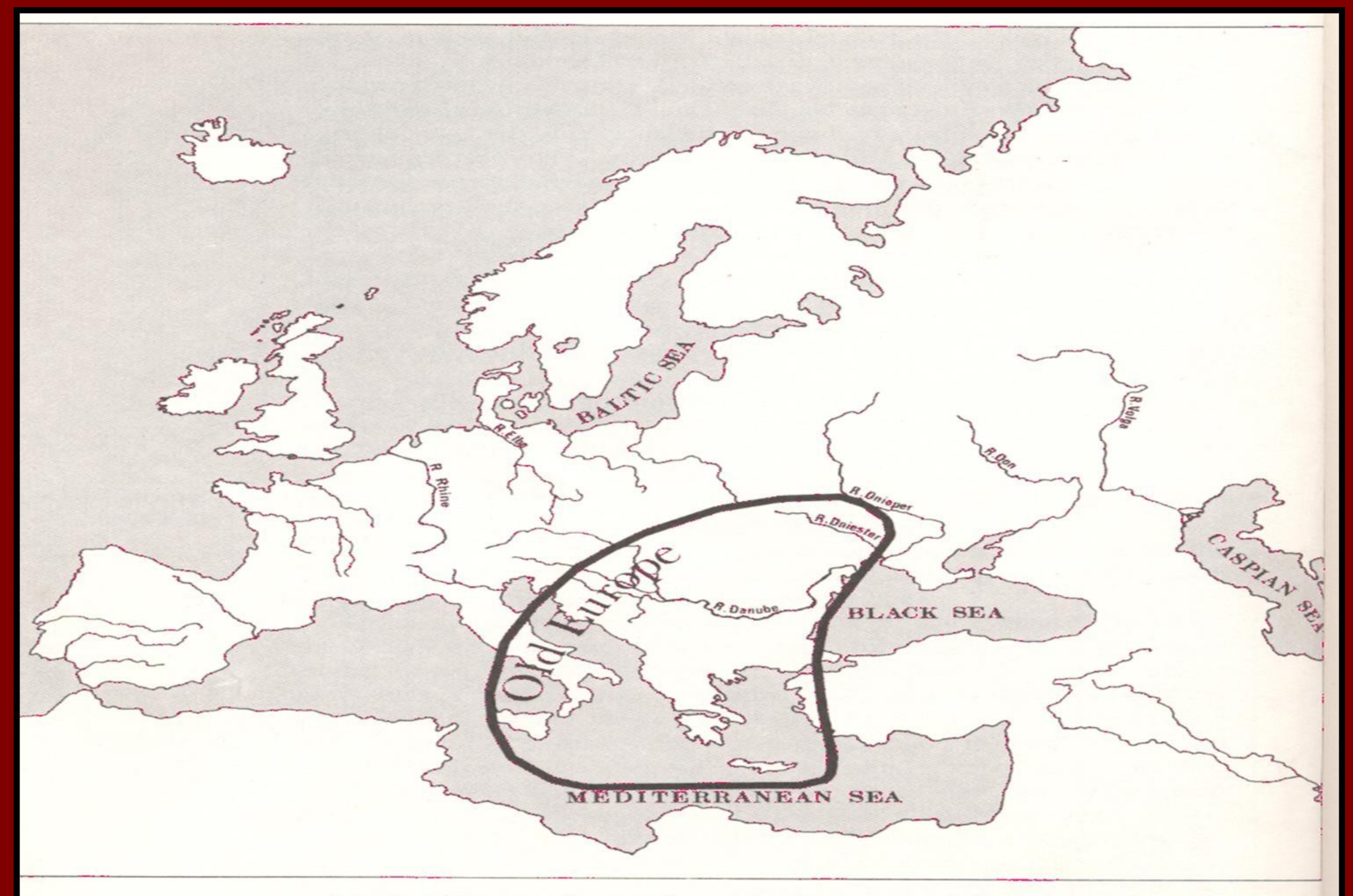


President and Founder: Dr. Napoleon Săvescu
Prezentare realizată de [Team](NS)[2]

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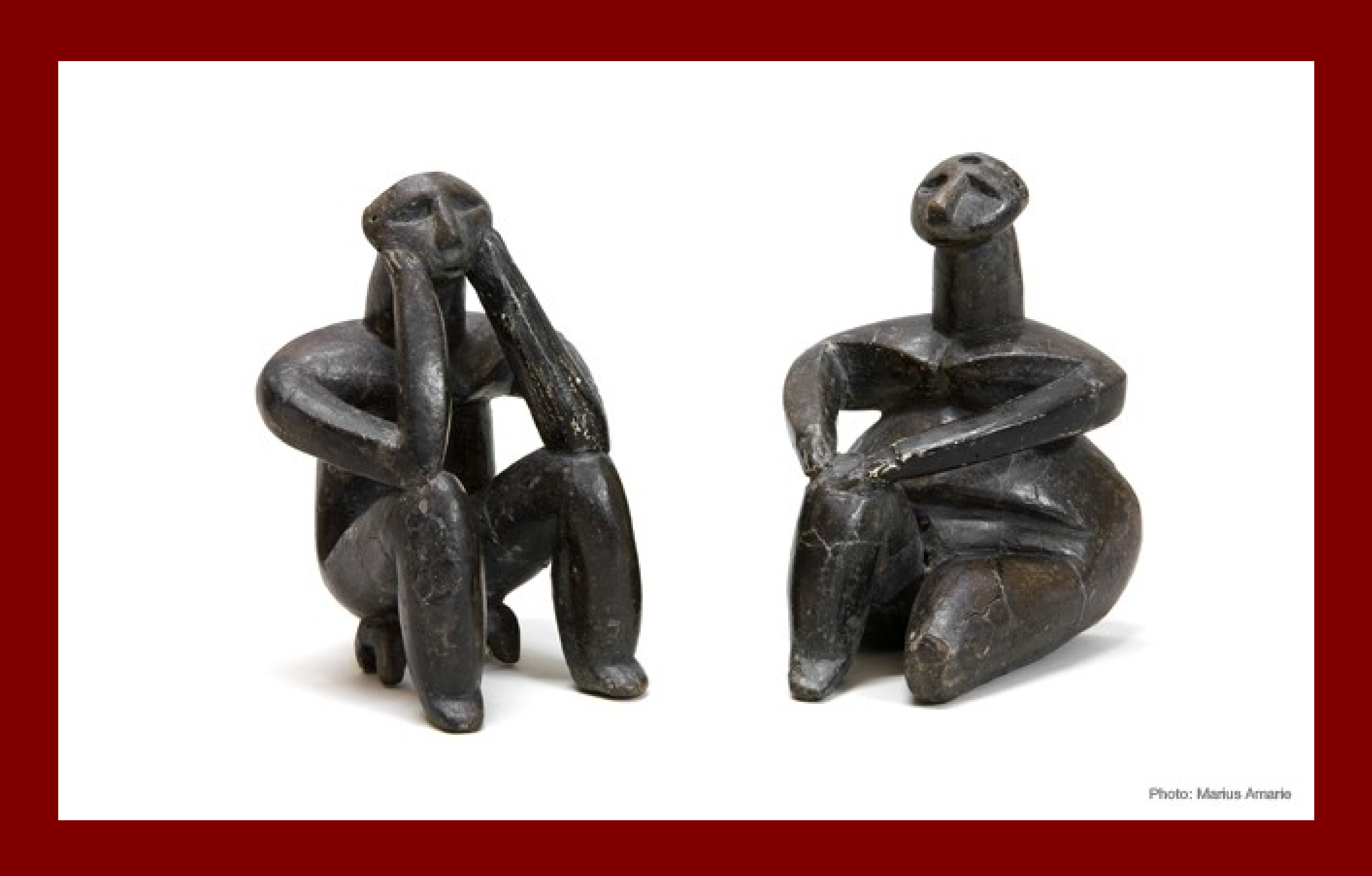
Long before Egypt or Mesopotamia rose to an equivalent level of
achievement, Old Europe was among the most sophisticated places that
humans inhabited; some towns grew to city-like sizes.

- The Lost World of Old Europe: The Danube Valley, 5000 – 3500 BC, brings to the United States for the first time more than 250 objects recovered by archaeologists from the graves,towns, and villages of Old Europe, a period of related prehistoric cultures that achieved a precocious peak of sophistication and creativity in what is now southeastern Europe between 5000 and 4000 BC, and then mysteriously collapsed by 3500 BC.



Map I: Old Europe: the area of autochthonous European civilization, c. 7000–3500 BC *in relation to the rest of Europe*

“The Thinker” and Female Figurine from Cernavodă, Fired Clay, Hamangia, Cernavodă, 5000–4600 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 15906, 15907
Photo: Marius Amarie



The Human Figure

“The Thinker” and Female Figurine from Cernavodă, Fired Clay, Hamangia, Cernavodă, 5000–4600 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 15906, 15907
Photo: Marius Amarie

- In 1956 these two figurines were found among the grave goods excavated at the Hamangia necropolis of Cernavodă. The male figure, elbows on his knees and hands on either side of his face, sits on a low four-legged stool. The woman, seated on the ground, has one leg extended forward and the other bent at the knee. In the Neolithic period, male figurines constituted a small minority of the very large corpus of figurines found both in necropoleis and in households. Even more striking is the fact that “The Thinker” is coupled with a female figurine, a decided rarity that clearly indicates a direct relationship between the two. While his gesture has been interpreted as reflective of a pensive state, it could also be taken as a symbol of mourning. Both figurines were deposited in a grave beside the inhumed body, as if to accompany the deceased into the afterlife.

Female Figurine, Fired Clay, Hamangia, Baïa, 5000–4600 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11662
Photo: Marius Amarie



The Human Figure

Photo: Marius Amarie

Female Figurine, Fired Clay, Hamangia, Baïa, 5000–4600 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11662
Photo: Marius Amarie

- Hamangia refers to a group of settlements and cemeteries located in southeastern Romania and northeastern Bulgaria that date from the mid-sixth through the mid-fifth millennia BC. The figurines produced by these groups are marked by a lack of detail in the body parts and by the absence of heads. They are generally defined instead by pillar necks, wide hips, and arms that frequently end without hands. Many are shown with large breasts and bellies, prompting some scholars to read them as pregnant females, thus relating them to rituals of fertility and fecundity.
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Female Figurine, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Drăguşeni, 4050–3900 BC
Botoşani County Museum, Botoşani: 7558
Photo: Marius Amarie



- **Female Figurine, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Drăguşeni, 4050–3900** BC
  Botoşani County Museum, Botoşani: 7558
  Photo: Marius Amarie
- Female figurines were fashioned by virtually every Neolithic cultural group, and are the most widely known category of objects from Old Europe. The miniaturized female bodies, as in this figurine, are characterized by abstraction with truncated, elongated, or emphasized body parts, and their surfaces are decorated with incised or painted geometric and abstract patterns. The heightened sense of female corporality has led traditional scholarship to identify these figurines as representations of a powerful mother goddess, whose relationship to earthly and human fertility is demonstrated by the remarkable, sexualized forms. However, this single, overarching interpretation has recently been challenged: the great variety of contexts in which the figurines are found (burials, households, hoards, and sanctuaries) suggests that they might have assumed different social, cultural, and even religious connotations according to the specific audience and environment for which they were modeled.

Prestige Materials



Zoomorphic Appliqués, Possibly Representing Bulls, Gold, Varna, Varna, Grave 36, 4400–4200 BC
Varna Regional Museum of History: 1633, 1634
Photo: Rumyana Kostadinova Ivanova

- Excavated in 1974, the two appliqués formed part of a rich array of grave goods that included gold, copper, flint, bone, and ceramic objects. Possibly functioning as amulets, the two animals have been identified as bulls by the shapes of their horns and tails. Representations of bulls are widespread among Neolithic societies. Their association with divinities related to nature and agriculture, and to rituals of fecundity and fertility, is well established.

Spondylus Bracelet, Spondylus, Hamangia Culture, Cernavodă, ca. 5000–4600 bc
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11666
Photo: Marius Amarie



Spondylus Bracelet, Spondylus, Hamangia Culture, Cernavodă, ca. 5000–4600 bc
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11666
Photo: Marius Amarie

- Made of Spondylus gaederopus, a shell found only in the Mediterranean Sea, this bracelet attests to the oldest long-distance trade of a specific, identifiable natural resource. Archaeological excavations throughout modern Europe have confirmed the existence in the fifth millennium BC of a complex exchange network that allowed for transportation of this precious material over nearly three thousand kilometers, from the Aegean coasts all the way to Britain. Traded mostly in an unworked or roughly worked state, the shells were locally carved to fulfill the desired aesthetics of the Neolithic societies that acquired them. This conically shaped bracelet is made from a single shell and is of a type favored by the Hamangia culture.

Axe, Copper, Cucuteni, Bogdăneşti, 3700–3500 bc
Moldova National Museum Complex, Iaşi: 740
Photo: Marius Amarie



Axe, Copper, Cucuteni, Bogdăneşti, 3700–3500 bc
Moldova National Museum Complex, Iaşi: 740
Photo: Marius Amarie

- Copper metallurgy was a fundamental innovation that changed life not just in Old Europe, but for all European societies. The discovery of smelting permitted metalworkers to extract huge quantities of pure metallic copper from the abundant malachite and azurite ores of southeastern Europe, and led quickly to the excavation of large mines in Bulgaria and Serbia.
  The differing styles of cast hammer-axes and axe-adzes, the most complex products of Old European metallurgy, suggest that there might have been three principal regional schools of copper metalworking: one centered in Bulgaria, another in northern Serbia, and a third somewhere in the western Carpathians. The strongly arched shape of this axe relates it to the Carpathian school of metalworking. Suggestions of wear can be found throughout its surface.

Architectural Model with Seven Figurines, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Gheläieşti, 3700–3500 BC
Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 12550–12552, 13209–13213
Photo: Marius Amarie



- **Architectural Model with Seven Figurines, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Gheläieşti, 3700–3500** BC
  Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 12550–12552, 13209–13213
  Photo: Marius Amarie

- Five large female figurines and two small males were found inside this loosely rectangular architectural structure. The opening possibly indicates a doorway, while the painted geometric patterns resemble known decorations from Cucuteni households and temples, suggesting that the model represents a domestic or religious space. The miniaturization of both the human figures and the architectural structures elucidates the complex relationship between Old Europeans and the built spaces defining their communities.

Architectural Model, Fired Clay, Gumelnița, Căscioarele, 4600–3900 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 12156
Photo: Marius Amarie



- **Architectural Model, Fired Clay, Gumelnița, Căscioarele, 4600–3900** BC
  National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 12156
  Photo: Marius Amarie

- Excavated in 1966 at Căscioarele—a river-island settlement of the Gumelnița culture—this architectural model was discovered close to a large house and a sacrificial area, identified as a sanctuary and characterized by what were possibly a bench-altar and numerous cult vases. The surface of the model is enlivened by incisions and paint that define a series of four architectural buildings, variously interpreted as temples or households. Each of the buildings has an arched doorway with gables similar to a bull’s horns. The buildings are set on a relatively tall substructure decorated with horizontal lines and ten round holes. This substructure may represent a stylized tell, or artificial mounds. Neolithic models are usually seen as cult objects that reflect an unknown religious custom.

The Art of Ceremony

- **Monumental Tripartite Vessel, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Scânteia, 4200–4050** BC
  Moldova National Museum Complex, Iaşi: 17266, 19266
  Photo: Marius Amarie
- Found in a domestic context, this spherical vessel rests on a hollow cylindrical stand and is covered by a bell-shaped lid. The three elements were meant to be used as an ensemble and are covered with a pattern of interlocking black spiral outlines placed against a red background. While the vessel's ultimate function is still subject to debate, its impressive monumental size, combined with its complex tripartite construction and intricate decoration, suggests a ceremonial purpose clearly distinct from the original utilitarian function of ceramics.

Monumental Tripartite Vessel, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Scânteia, 4200–4050 BC
Moldova National Museum Complex, Iaşi: 17266, 19266
Photo: Marius Amarie



Anthropomorphic Vessel, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Scânteia-Dealul Bodeşti, 4500–4050 BC
The Institute of Archaeology, Iaşi: 3027
Photo: Marius Amarie



Photo: Marius Amarie

Anthropomorphic Vessel, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Scânteia-Dealul Bodeşti, 4500–4050 BC
The Institute of Archaeology, Iaşi: 3027
Photo: Marius Amarie

- Shaped in the form of a human body, this vessel has a recognizable torso and legs that are emphasized by means of grooves and white paint. Arms are suggested by the two pierced handles. The terracotta piece probably functioned as a drinking vessel.

Amphora, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru, 3700–3500 BC
Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 16422
Photo: Marius Amarie



Photo: Marius Amarie

- **Amphora, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru, 3700–3500** BC
  Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 16422
  Photo: Marius Amarie
- During the last phase of Cucuteni history, human figures and animals—previously present only as three-dimensional figurines that were more or less naturalistically rendered—began to appear also as painted decorations on ceramic vessels. This amphora, thought to be used for storage of both liquids and solids, shows two decorative registers outlined in black color over an off-white polished background. The main register is characterized by a complex arrangement of ovals, trapeziums, triangles, and diamonds, all defined by series of concentric lines. The background of the vessel contains ten highly stylized human figures comprised of two mirrored triangles surmounted by a circle to outline the body and the head, and two swerving lines terminating in disks to depict arms. Often interpreted as female figures, these forms raise interesting questions related to the supposed, but not certain, existence of a Cucuteni pantheon, and to a possible ritualistic use for the vessel.

Pintadera:
Precursors to Writing

- **Pintadera, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Bodeşti-Frumuşica, 4450–4200** BC
  Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 1227
  Photo: Marius Amarie

- Pintaderas, or ornamental clay stamps, are a visually striking but highly enigmatic category of artifacts found during the Neolithic period at sites across Europe and Asia. Featuring a wide array of decorative motifs, including meanders, spirals, waves, and zigzag lines, the seals may have been used to print or impress onto a range of materials (textiles, leather, human skin, and even bread). Interestingly, the patterns incised on the discs find close comparisons with those painted on contemporaneous ceramic vessels and other decorated artifacts

Pintadera, Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Bodeşti-Frumuşica, 4450–4200 BC
Neamț County Museum Complex, Piatra Neamț: 1227
Photo: Marius Amarie



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Pintadera in the Shape of a Left Leg, Fired Clay, Starčevo-Criş, Zăuan, 6200 –5500 BC
County Museum of History and Art, Zalău: 25/1977
Photo: Marius Amarie



- **Pintadera in the Shape of a Left Leg, Fired Clay, Starčevo-Criş, Zăuan, 6200 –5500** BC
  County Museum of History and Art, Zalău: 25/1977
  Photo: Marius Amarie

- This pintadera in the shape of a left leg was found in a domestic context at a site belonging to the Starčevo-Criş culture, one of the first and oldest identifiable cultural groups of Old European farmers. This pintadera is decidedly exceptional, particularly when compared with the common circular type with small knobs. The leg would have been held by the individual who was using it to mark an object with its zig-zag insignia. Whether the leg carried symbolic meaning is unknown. Its unique shape, however, suggests that it held a special place with its owner.

The People of the Steppes

- **Necklace (35 Shells, 26 Beads), Shell (Cardium edule, Mactra carolina), Suvorovo-Novodanilovka, Giurgiuleşti, Grave 2, 4500–4300 BC**
  The National Museum of Archaeology and History of Moldova, Chişinău: FB-27571-9
  Photo: Jurie Foca and Valery Hembaruc

  This necklace was unearthed in 1991 during excavations at the Giurgiuleşti cemetery. The burials and grave goods found there, and at forty other necropoleis spread throughout the lower Danube valley, constitute the only material remains of the Suvorovo-Novodanilovka culture, a prehistoric nomadic group. The necklace, comprised of two different shell types found in the Black Sea, was discovered in a child’s grave together with other grave goods made of marble and copper.

Necklace (35 Shells, 26 Beads), Shell (Cardium edule, Mactra carolina), Suvorovo-Novodanilovka, Giurgiuleşti, Grave 2, 4500–4300 BC
The National Museum of Archaeology and History of Moldova, Chişinău: FB-27571-9
Photo: Jurie Foca and Valery Hembaruc



Horse-head Mace, Stone, Indo-European, Casimcea, 4000 BC
National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11650
Photo: Marius Amarie



- **Horse-head Mace, Stone, Indo-European, Casimcea, 4000 BC**
  National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest: 11650
  Photo: Marius Amarie

  At the end of the fifth millennium BC, a series of dramatic changes took place in the lower Danube Valley. Hundreds of settlements were burned and abandoned, and the people who originally inhabited them scattered, turning to an economy based on husbandry. The sudden collapse of prominent Old European cultural groups may have been caused by a period of intense raiding by nomadic groups who came from the steppe grasslands of modern Ukraine. The graves of these nomadic people contained objects suggestive of their war-like nature, including arrows, axes, spearheads, and horse-head maces like this one,.

The Lost World of Old Europe
The Danube Valley, 5000–3500 BC

Edited by David W. Anthony
With Jennifer Y. Chi





ISAW
The Lost World of Old Europe
The Danube Valley, 5000–3500 BC
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"The Thinker" and Female Figurine
In 1956 these two figurines were found among the grave goods
excavated at the Hamangia necropolis of Cernavodă. The male
figure, elbows on his knees and hands on either side of his face,
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has one leg extended forward and the other bent at the knee.
In the Neolithic period male figurines constituted a small minority
of the very large corpus of figurines found both in necropoleis
and in households. Even more significantly, "The Thinker" is







Disk, Flint, Flotesti, Vadul Catagatei, Romania, 4000-3900 BC, MBR; 10535





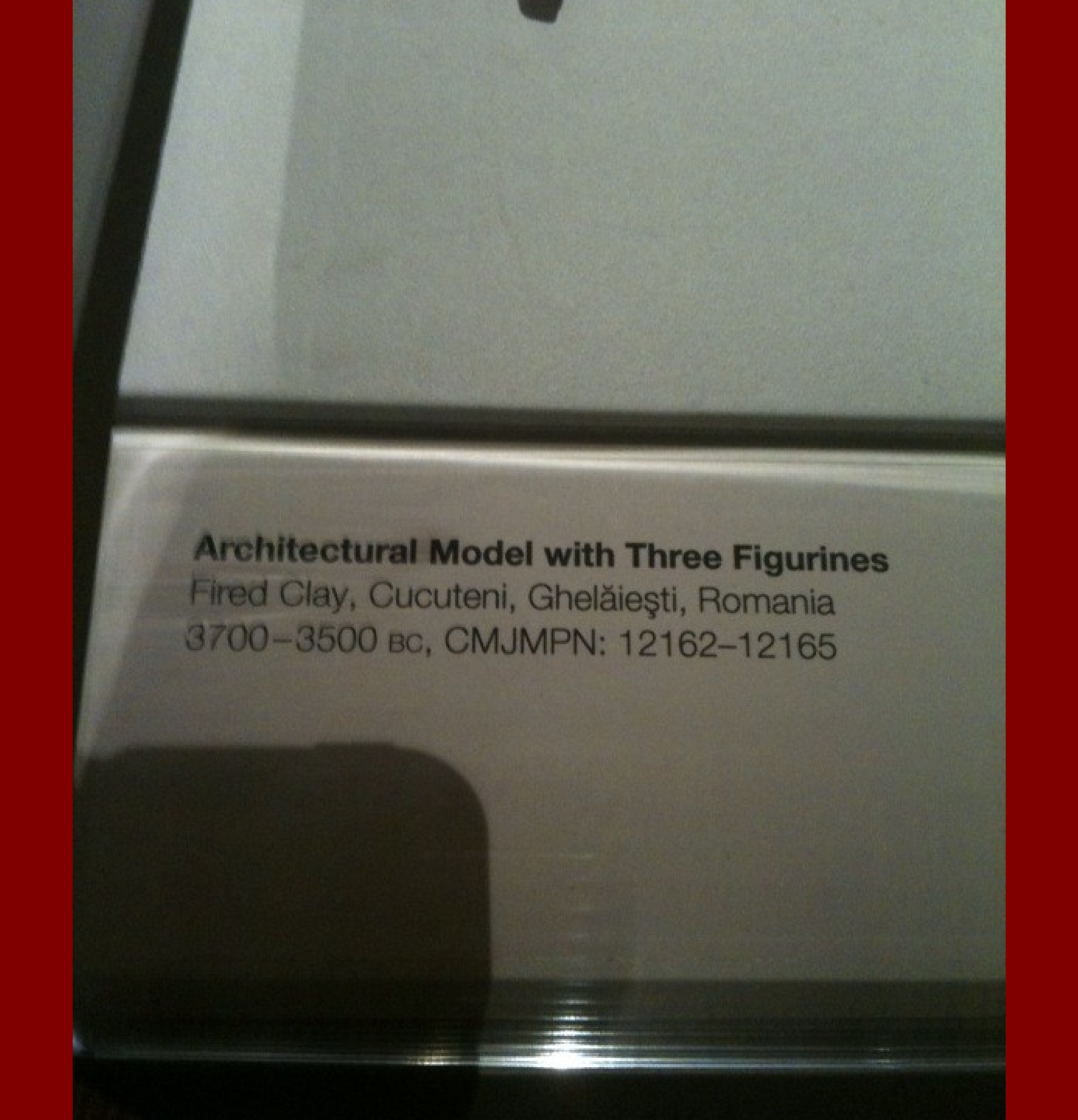

ceramics, human and animal bones, and offering tables.
Objects such as those displayed here may have been media
for ritual communication with domestic spirits.








Designed to hold two vessels by means of the holes visible
on the upper face, this stand is decorated with a complex
repertoire of incised motifs comprising parallel lines
concentric rhombi. The shorter sides have a
framed by two registers reminiscent of
This arrangement is suggestive of an


Architectural Model with Three Figurines
Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Ghelăieşti, Romania
3700–3500 BC, CMJMPN: 12162–12165











Seated Anthropomorphic Figurine with Triple pierced Ears

Fired Clay, Gumelnița, Cernavodă, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MNIR: 32456











Top:

Female Figurine

Bone, Gumelniţa, Vităneşti, Romania

4600–3900 BC, MJITR: 25862

Female Figurine

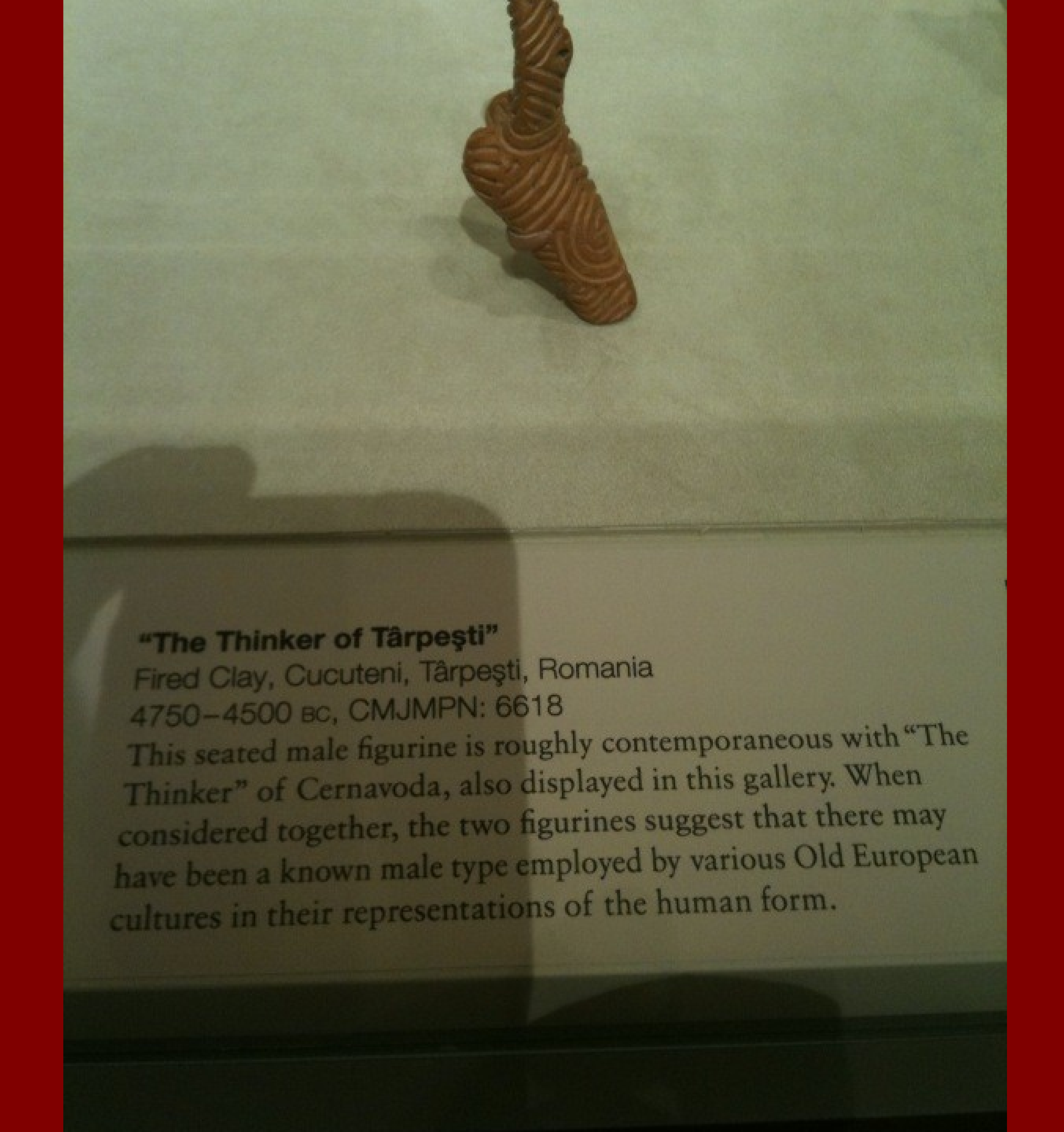
Bone, Gumelniţa, Siliştea, Romania

4600–3900 BC, MJITR: 6349








"The Thinker of Târpeşti"
Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Târpeşti, Romania
4750–4500 BC, CMJMPN: 6618
This seated male figurine is roughly contemporaneous with "The
Thinker" of Cernavoda, also displayed in this gallery. When
considered together, the two figurines suggest that there may
have been a known male type employed by various Old European
cultures in their representations of the human form.



Architectural Model with Seven Figurines

Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Ghelăieşti, Romania

3700–3500 BC, CMJMPN: 12550–12552, 13209–13213









Axe

Copper, Cucuteni, Bogdăneşti, Romania

3700–3500 BC, CMNM: 740

Dagger

Copper, Cucuteni, Mereşti, Romania

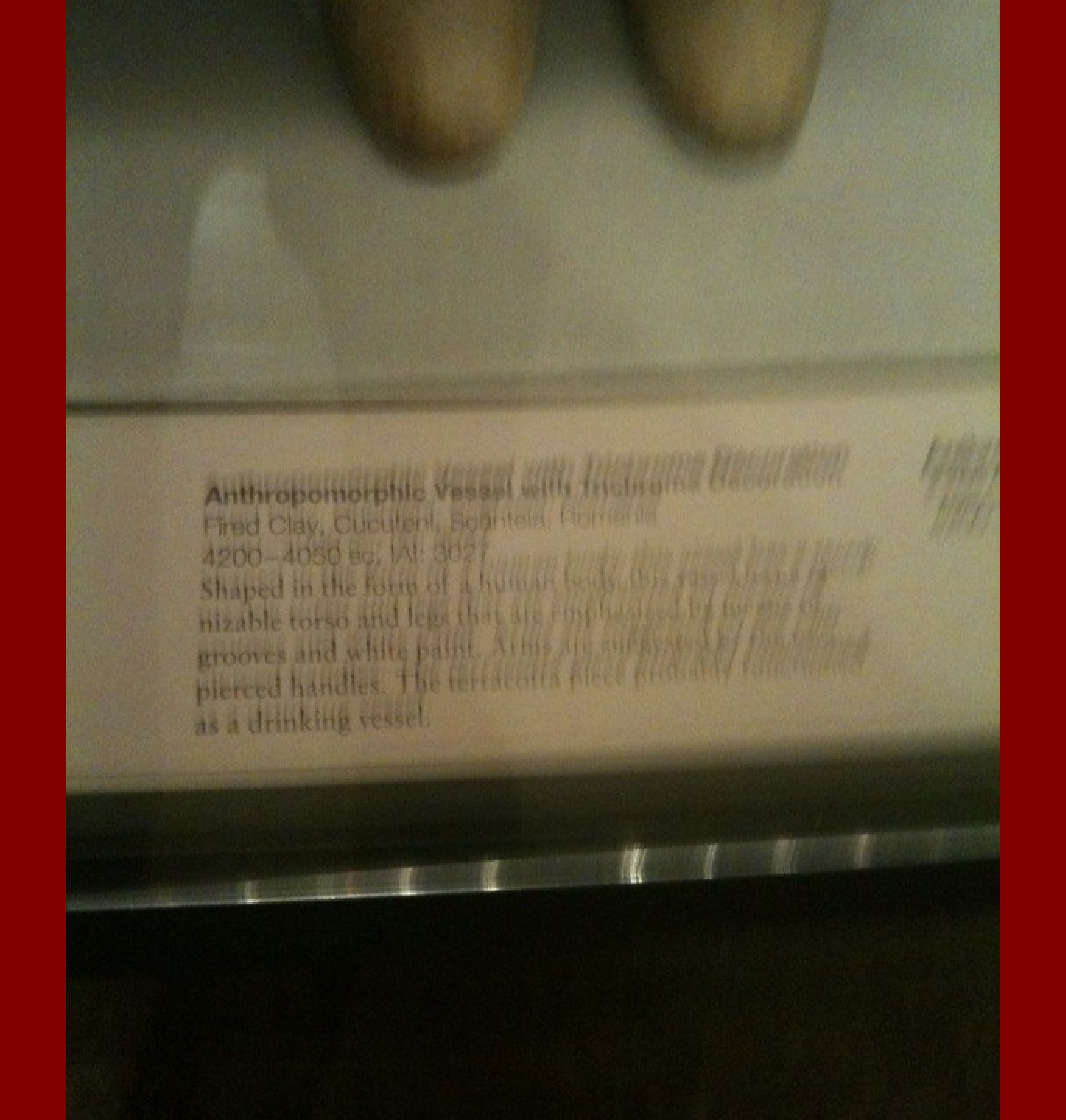
4500–3900 BC, MJIBV: 7060



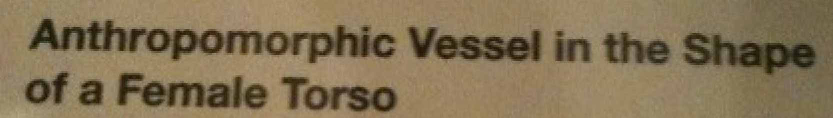







Anthropomorphic Vessel with
Fired Clay, Cucuteni,
4200–4050 BC
Shaped in the form of
nizable torso and legs
grooves and white paint.
pierced handles.
as a drinking vessel.

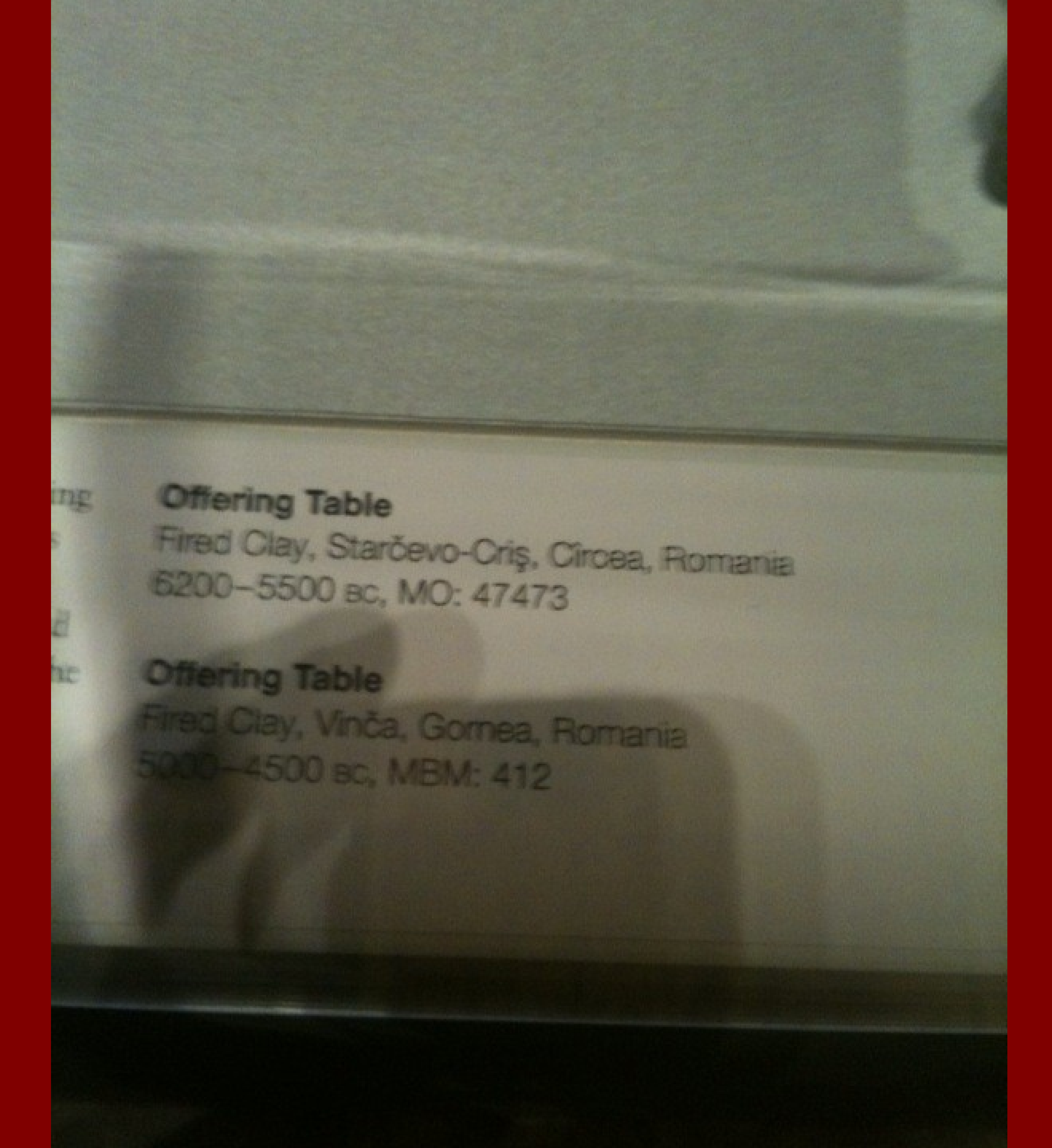


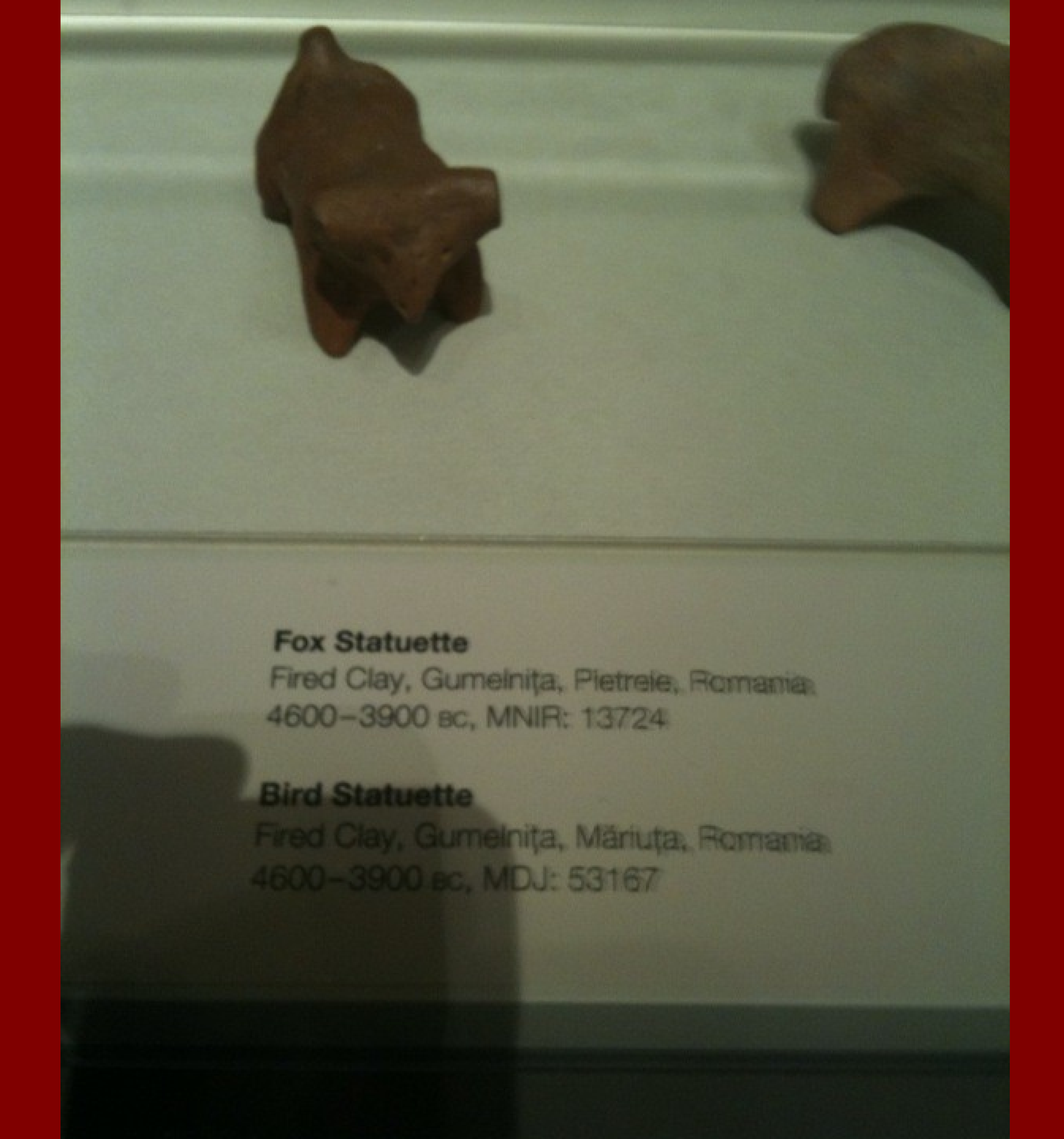


Anthropomorphic Vessel in the Shape
of a Female Torso
Fired Clay, Gumelniţa Culture, Gumelniţa, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MNIR: 13812
Anthropomorphic Vessel with Lid
Fired Clay, Gumelniţa, Sultana, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MJITAGR: 2667,68




Offering Table
Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Drăguşeni, Romania
4050–3900 BC, MJBT: 17322
Offering Table
Fired Clay, Boïan-Vidra, Lişcoteanca, Romania
4900–4700 BC, MBR: 13371


Offering Table
Fired Clay, Starčevo-Criş, Circea, Romania
6200–5500 BC, MO: 47473
Offering Table
Fired Clay, Vinča, Gornea, Romania
5000–4500 BC, MBM: 412


Fox Statuette
Fired Clay, Gumelniţa, Pietrele, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MNIR: 13724
Bird Statuette
Fired Clay, Gumelniţa, Măriuţa, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MDJ: 53167


Zoomorphic Whistle
Fired Clay, Gumelniţa, Hîrşova, Romania
4600–3900 BC, MINAC: 39487
Dog Statuette
Fired Clay, Varna, V. Golyamo Delchevo, Bulgaria
4400–4200 BC, Varna Museum: 3632







Standing Female Figurine
Fired Clay, Hamangia, Baia, Romania
5000–4600 BC, MNIR: 11662

Female Figurine, Possibly Pregnant
Fired Clay, Hamangia, Cernavodă, Romania
[illegible], MNIR: 11663











Headless Figurine Wearing Tunic and Pants
Fired Clay, Vinča, Liubcova, Romania
5000–4500 BC, MBM: 339

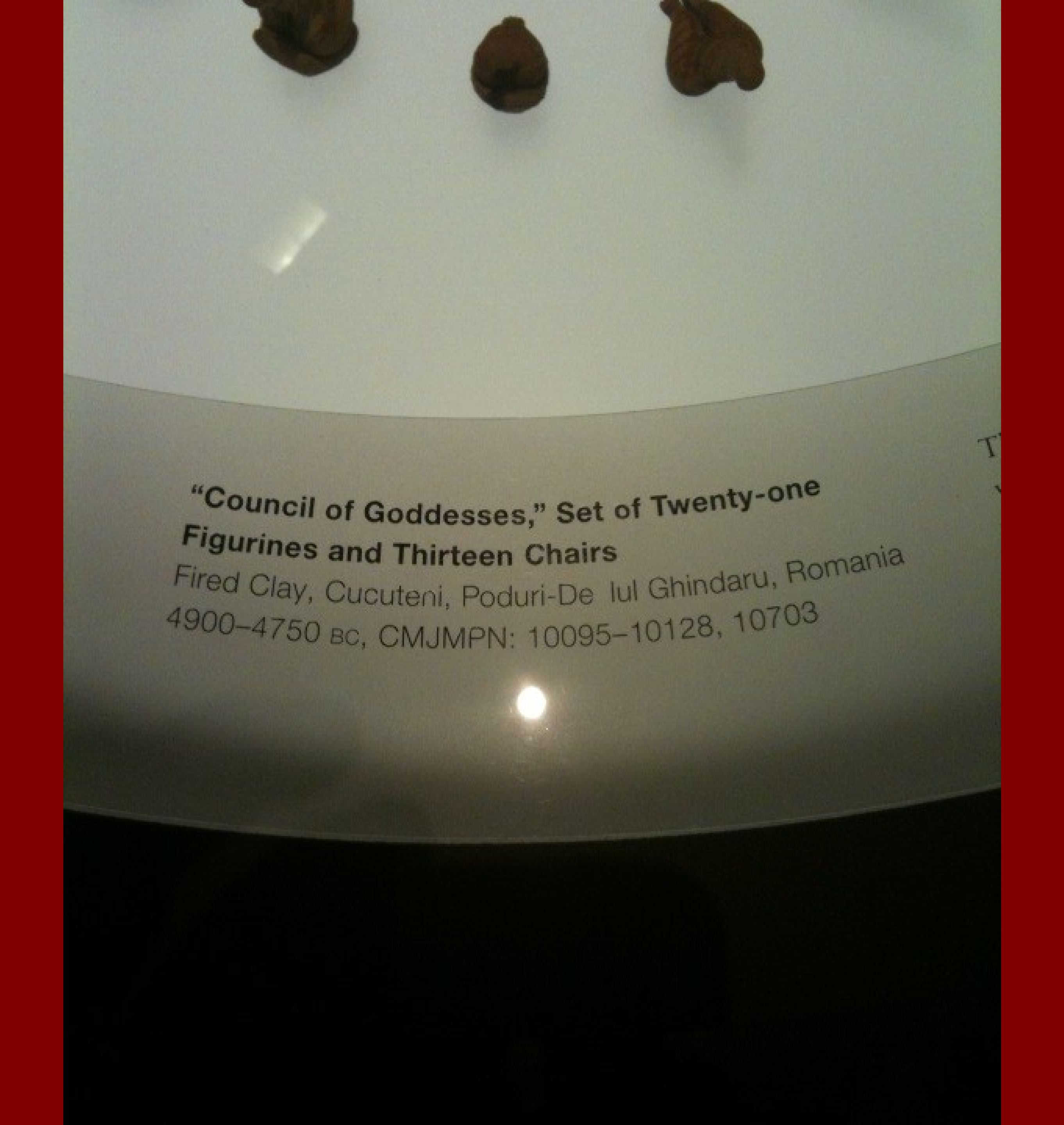
Anthropomorphic Figurine with Raised Arms
Fired Clay, Vinča, Chişoda Veche, Romania
5000–4500 BC, MB: 8192










"Council of Goddesses," Set of Twenty-one
Figurines and Thirteen Chairs
Fired Clay, Cucuteni, Poduri-De lul Ghindaru, Romania
4900–4750 BC, CMJMPN: 10095–10128, 10703

Americanii ne pot cunoaste acum cu adevarat, caci taramurile noastre ar reprezenta leaganul civilizatiei europene. Peste 200 de artefacte vechi de mai bine de 6000 de ani printre care Ganditorul de la Hamangia, vase de ceramica pictate, stranii figurine sculptate, ornamente din aur si cupru, sunt expuse de o saptamana la New York, la Institutul pentru Studii ale Lumii Antice al Universitatii locale.

Luand in considerare ca este pentru prima data cand sunt expuse lucrari romanesti de arheologie in spatiul nord-american, Theodor Paleologu a precizat: "este o expozitie extrem de ambitioasa, ambitioasa pentru New York University, dar ambitia lor ne face noua bine.

" "The Lost World of Old Europe - The Danube Valley 5000-3500 BC“ prezinta bunuri de patrimoniu arheologic din categoria "Tezaur" din colectiile a 19 muzee din Romania (in numar de 175), dar si din Bulgaria si Republica Moldova.

- **Obiectele de arta din Europa preistorica sunt dovada incontestabila a faptului ca, mult inainte de Egipt si Mesopotamia, spatiul danubiano- carpatic, reprezentat prin cultura neo-eneolitica din Cucuteni, dar si din Boian, Gumelnita, Hamangia, Vadastra sau Vinca, a fost unul dintre cele mai sofisticate leagane de civilizatie preistorica.**
-
- **Cultura Cucuteni, considerata prima civilizatie a Europei, este un element care ar trebui sa devina definitoriu pentru tara noastra: "daca vrem sa facem brand de tara, de acolo trebuie sa pornim", a completat Paleologu.**
-
- **Bunurile de patrimoniu selectate sa faca parte din expozitie ofera publicului american posibilitatea de a reflecta asupra uimitoarei "modernitati" avant la lettre a civilizatiilor preistorice ce au existat in zona danubiano-carpatica in urma cu mai bine de sapte milenii.**